

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, VS

SUBJ: VISIT OF VIETNAMESE LABOR LEADER

REF: STATE 104201

1. SPEAKING TO FRIENDS SEEING HIM OFF AT THE AIRPORT MAY 18, TRAN QUOC BUU, PRESIDENT OF THE VIETNAMESE CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (CVT), SAID HIS NINE-DAY VISIT HAD SUCCEEDED "BEYOND MY EXPECTATIONS."

2. HIS PROGRAM, ARRANGED BY THE AFL-CIO AND ITS ASIAN ARM, THE ASIAN-AMERICAN FREE LABOR INSTITUTE (AAFLI), INCLUDED APPOINTMENTS WITH AFL-CIO PRES. MEANY, SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY, CONGRESSMEN CLEMENT ZABLOCKI, AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSOLL.

3. HUNTER WHARTON, AFL-CIO VICE PRESIDENT, HELPED BUU
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CELEBRATE HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY MAY 13 BY HOSTING A LUNCHEON

IN HIS HONOR. AMONG OTHER SUCH OCCASIONS WAS A LUNCHEON AT THE DEPARTMENT HOSTED BY DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STEARNS MAY 14.

4. BUU STRESSED THREE MAIN THEMES IN HIS CONTACTS AROUND TOWN:

A. DESPITE THE PEACE ACCORD, THE COMMUNISTS SHOW NO SIGN

OF RELENTING ON THEIR PLANS TO TAKE OVER THE COUNTRY BY MILITARY FORCE, AND IN FACT ARE INCREASING THE PRESSURE ON ALL FRONTS.

B. THE INTENSIFIED COMMUNIST PRESSURE HAS CAUSED MORE PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO RALLY AROUND THE CVT. REFUGEES FROM THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED AREAS, SUCH AS THE RUBBER PLANTATIONS NORTH OF SAIGON, ARE STREAMING TO THE NON-COMMUNIST SIDE, AND MANY ARE LOOKING TO THE CVT FOR HELP. FURTHER, TWO FORMER AFFILIATES, THE RAILROAD AND THE BANK WORKERS, ARE REJOINING THE CVT.

C. UNFORTUNATELY, AT A TIME WHEN THE COMMUNISTS ARE STEPPING UP THEIR ACTIVITIES, THE AMERICANS ARE STEPPING DOWN THEIRS. THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE STILL RELY HEAVILY ON THE UNITED STATES FOR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID.

5. SENSITIVE TO THE CRITICISMS DIRECTED AT PRESIDENT THIEU, BUU DISCREETLY DREW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THIEU AND THE VIETNAMESE NATION, ARGUING THAT DISAGREEMENTS OR DISAPPOINTMENTS WITH THIEU SHOULD NOT CAUSE THE UNITED STATES TO GIVE UP ON THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE.

6. ACCORDING TO BUU AND HIS AFL-CIO ESCORT, HARRY GOLDBERG, BOTH HUMPHREY AND ZABLOCKI SEEMED IMPRESSED WITH THE CASE BUU MADE. HUMPHREY, WHO HAS TALKED WITH BUU SEVERAL TIMES OVER THE YEARS, VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO RETURN TO SAIGON TO DEMONSTRATE HIS SOLIDARITY WITH VIETNAMESE LABOR. BUU QUICKLY TRIED TO PIN HUMPHREY DOWN FOR A VISIT IN JULY. HUMPHREY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE--HE WOULD IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, HE SAID.
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7. BUU ALREADY REALIZED THAT POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR AID TO VIETNAM WAS AT A LOW EBB, AND THIS POINT CAME UP ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS. MEANY, FOR ONE, TOLD BUU THAT THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY IN GENERAL IS TO WANT TO FORGET VIETNAM. BUT MEANY INDICATED THE AFL-CIO WOULD CONTINUE TO LEND STRONG SUPPORT TO THE VIETNAMESE AID PROGRAM ON THE HILL. AS A SYMBOL OF AFL-CIO SOLIDARITY WITH

VIETNAMESE LABOR'S CAUSE, BOTH MEANY AND AFL-CIO SECRETARY-TREASURER LANE KIRKLAND ATTENDED A VIETNAMESE EMBASSY DINNER IN BUU'S HONOR MAY 15.

8. BUU DEMONSTRATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT HIS RELATIONS WITH AAFLI AND ITS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MORRIS PALADINO, REMAIN EXCELLENT. THEY CONFERRED FREQUENTLY AND AT LENGTH ABOUT THE AAFLI PROGRAM IN VIET-NAM. PALADINO ALSO BRIEFED BUU ON AAFLI PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING THE BACKGROUND OF A CHANGE IN ITS VIETNAM COUNTRY DIRECTOR. RUSH

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